

Just Stories

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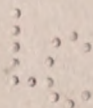
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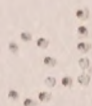
By
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FOREWORD.

At times I have found a book of such size that it could be slipped into almost any pocket or tucked into a crevice in the hand bag; a book of stories of such length that they won for themselves a reading, to the pleasure of the reader, when inertia or lassitude or fatigue or whatever one chooses to call it, and the inclination to read, were on very nearly equal terms.

I have written the stories that follow in the hope that to some weary with work or care they may furnish, in small, broken doses, the good medicine that for a moment lulls the mind and leads to reverie.

Inasmuch as the stories may have no other merit, I would emphasize that when, as has been nearly always the case, others have done the telling

or have been most active in the conversation, I have not written that they said "tew" for "to" or "dun" for "done."

Also the book has at least this merit—it is not a far journey from the first page to the last. Here's hoping that many may make the journey with pleasure to them and profit to

THE AUTHOR.

DOLLY'S BARGAIN CIGARS.

We all knew that there was something seriously wrong when Jim came into the office yesterday morning. I knew what the trouble was as soon as I got near to him, for I do not smoke.

I was deeply concerned, for I have known Jim for twenty years and we have been good friends from the beginning. He was thirty-one then and already all his friends were certain that he would never marry. All the girls liked him and he liked all the girls—that was just the trouble. He was fond of company, especially of girls. He was the rare sort that both men and women like. The girls regarded him as an elder brother—and more. I would not be surprised if girls told him things they would be

afraid to ask their mothers about, and he always gave them honest, wise advice. He was the very soul of honor, as some one has said. I've heard him say he had never made a good girl worse, and I have no idea it ever occurred to him to make a bad girl better. He was no saint and was far from calling himself one. He had plenty of the red corpuscles, and his religion was being a gentleman according to his definition of a gentleman.

As I've said, as far back as twenty years ago, when he was thirty-one, we all thought that he would never marry. Then about ten years ago Dorothy's family moved to the South Side. Dorothy and Jim took to each other unusual the first time they met. She just fitted to her name. There weren't so many Dorothys then. Her people called her Dolly. She was just a little plumpish, came scarcely to Jim's shoulder, didn't care a hang for

Browning or politics, made over her hats, and liked a good time. He was dark and she had blue eyes and light, fluffy hair. Jim always was leader in every crowd and Dolly always wanted to do what the others did. Still she had a lot of quiet temper and when she wanted to she could say the most cutting things—when it came to tongue no one ever made the rent off her. And when she did want a thing she wanted it and just held on till she got it. You know the kind—they don't raise a rumpus, but just keep pecking away.

You've probably guessed it right already, but we all guessed wrong until Charlie Crawford tried to be sweet on Dolly. Then Jim woke up and got busy and when Jim got busy he went some. Jim wanted a quiet home wedding, but Dolly wanted an Episcopal church wedding with every one of the fixtures, and that's the wedding they had.

That was ten years ago, when Jim was forty-one. Her folks gave it out that Dolly was eighteen, and she certainly wasn't more than twenty-one. We all wished them well and predicted trouble. Dolly was the only girl in the family, and pretty. Jim, remember, was forty-one. It was a dead cinch that trouble was ahead.

We were all wrong again. Jim was young for his years and seemed to realize that Dolly was his junior. They both liked shows and chop suey. By the way, Jim had always mixed some wine with the Chinese hash. Jim had a good salary—thirty a week. Then we noticed that they did not go much and we gave them up as hopeless when Jim II put in an appearance, just one day too late to celebrate the first anniversary of the wedding. Jim was the biggest fool about a baby I ever saw. Took it out in a fancy buggy and actually dropped beer from his lunch and took a bottle of baby booze!

They just kept on living like married people except that they never quarreled. They seemed to grow more and more like each other. What was surprising was that Jim grew more like Dolly than Dolly grew like Jim. Seemed wrong—she a woman and little and he a man and big.

They were the happiest people you ever saw until about three years ago. Then Mrs. Bull got very friendly with Dolly. Mrs. Bull is of the deeply religious sort. Dolly wanted Jim to go to church. Jim said they'd have to put blinders on him or he'd shy and sashay all over the church, but Jim went. Dolly thought they should set a good example and not drink wine with their chop suey—they had been going to shows again for Jim II was big enough to leave with the maid—Dolly always had Jim phone between every act to know if Jim II was all right—so they cut out the wine. Jim never really swore, but he used some

near-cuss words, and Dolly kept after him until he dropped them as well as he could. Mrs. Bull told Dolly there were lewd men in Jim's club and straightway Jim's place in the amen corner was for rent. But it seemed to be all right with Jim and he just adored Dolly and she just worshipped him.

Then Dolly came to the conclusion that using tobacco in any shape or form was wasteful, filthy and sinful. Jim had smoked ever since he could remember and he laid back against the britchin' at once. Finally, just about a year ago, it was agreed between them that Jim was to stop smoking for a year, if he could. Mrs. Bull had told Dolly that a man of right principles and proper will power could gain the mastery over any bad habit and that if he did not smoke for a year he would lose all desire for tobacco. It was agreed that if at the end of the year Jim wanted to smoke he could do so.

Jim stuck it out. We used to feel

sorry for him, especially as we all came back from lunch. We noticed that Jim hardly ever joked any more and that he had little to say. He wasn't sulky or cross or peeved, but just didn't have much to say.

Now the year was up day before yesterday midnight and when Jim came into the office yesterday morning I smelled tobacco smoke on him, as I intimated at the beginning. The others didn't smell it, for they smoke. I haven't smoked for twenty-four years. Had to quit. Poor as I am, I'd give five hundred dollars if I could have just three mild cigars a day.

About eleven o'clock Jim and I happened to meet in the men's toilet and Jim blurted right out that he was going to smoke in spite of hell and high water; that he had gone the limit and had been glad to do it, but that to cut out the smoke was asking altogether too much; and that if Dolly didn't like his smoking she could make

the best of it. What Jim said was so radical I'm not telling it. I was shocked.

Of course the boys and stenogs all knew it before noon and we all wanted to bet that there was domestic infelicity of a malignant type ahead—dead-oodles of it. On the Q. T. we all sympathized with Jim—especially the stenogs.

Of course in some way Dolly knew it the second Jim lit his cigar yesterday morning, which he did as soon as he got to the first cigar stand. Why is it that a wife knows everything her hubby does and the hubby is of all men the most ignorant of what she does? Guess a woman must love a man for what he does and he loves her for what he thinks she is.

Well, Jim went home last night looking for trouble all right. He took three drinks on the way home and he never was a booze fighter. He just would have them.

He sneaked in, though—he told me all about it in the men's toilet this morning—and suffering Jehosaphat! right on the table in the living room was a box of cigars.

Good, smokeable ones, too—three sixty-five for fifty. And the box was already opened. Dolly remembered the brand Jim used to like best and she knew where to buy them. He gave me one of them—just one. Never knew Jim to be stingy of his cigars before.

When he saw the box on the table and come to he took it right to Dolly and told her he would never smoke again—after the handsome way she'd done he would never want to smoke or do anything she didn't like. And she said she could hardly wait for the year to be up and he just had to smoke.

"I knew Dolly was the greatest woman ever was," declared Jim, "but, my God, man, I never knew before—"

Jim couldn't go farther. That big

fellow actually looked like he was going to cry.

We are all trying to change our bets on Jim and Dolly. We are offering long odds—and no takers.

Just now my stenog cut right in with, "Say, Dolly made an awful good buy when she got those cigars!"

THE TRAVELING MAN'S WIFE.

Just when Mac first knew about it, or had his suspicions, none of us know. It is certain, though, that he hadn't the slightest suspicion for a full year after all of us knew about it. It is always that way. Let a married woman get gay and the last man to know it is the one that should know it first. The reason is, I guess, that hubby always thinks he is so blanked wise. When a man marries he thinks that he is considerably more than the average, because his wife has made him believe that if he hadn't been the wisest guy and most fetching personality and most persistent, adroit and courageous wooer that ever was, he would never have got her—and the poor fool falls for it, every time. Oh, I'll acknowledge that I was among the worst. A

girl always works it that way—she may have a close guess coming that if she doesn't land the fellow that is going without suitable underwear to send her roses and candy, that she will never land any one, and she may be after that fellow so hot that her trail sizzles, nevertheless all his married days that man believes that he got his cross-eyed, sorrel-topped wife solely because of colossal ability and efficiency, sheer luck, or the favor of benevolent Providence, according as he is a business man, a commercial traveler, or is religious. You've heard talk about a woman being blind to a man's faults. Well, take it from me, she isn't. No other woman sees them quite as well. But after she has made up her mind to love him and share his pay check, she simply ignores those faults. She knows they are there, but she just shuts her eyes, as it were. But the man, good, old easy mark, can be fooled every time by the wife of his bosom. He never sees anything wrong

until another woman gets in the case and shows him. *Cherchez la femme*. That's all the French I know, but it's enough for any human being on earth, if he really knows it. If one could really know it and always act on it, he would be a philosopher, statesman and hero. When a man does catch on to his wife's indiscretions it is generally because some other woman has been a lot more indiscreet with him. And when a man falls out with his wife because she has gone wrong he wouldn't raise half as much of a fuss if she weren't older than when he married her, and always what he is fussing about is not what he should raise the tempest about—she still has him fooled.

Of course the first intimation any of us had that something about Mac's wife was wrong, came from Simpson. Simpson always was the first to know about such things. Strange how he always found out about each and every

scandal. It didn't matter if the scandal and Simpson were five hundred miles apart, he was the one to tell the fellows that were right there about it. Guess he had a sixth sense. Some of the boys used to swear that he just smelled scandal, but it was more than that. Why, when Jimmy Johnson had that mix-up with the red headed chambermaid in Galveston, Simpson knew about it three days after, and all the time he was in Northern Illinois—his territory went only as far south as Springfield and Quincy. D'Orey, Smitzler and Jones were all in Texas at the time and not one of them knew a thing about it until three months afterwards, when they met Simpson at the state pow-wow of the M. W. When Kent got soused in Omaha and started in to shoot up the house and hit one of the girls, the first fellow to know that the William Smith juggled there was really Kent, was Simpson, and Simpson was in Burlington, Iowa, at

the time. That was what made it so much more remarkable, for you know Burlington is so slow it runs backwards. When Charlie Barrett lost all his expense money in that back corner fourth floor room in the Hotel Benoit—Mrs. Benoit paid for that hotel playing cards with the boys—and tried to get out of town without paying his bill, Simpson knew it before any of the fellows working in that territory. Certain animals and birds and bugs are nuts too hard for me to crack. How is it that as soon as something that ought to be buried where it can do no harm, begins to smell a little, the buzzards that no one has been able to see fly right down? A buzzard must be able to smell twenty miles. They say that when decent men can't help themselves and get filth on them, like in an army, the vermin just come in millions out of nothing. And then you know there's an animal—I've forgotten its name—that would rather dig up and

feast on rotten stuff than to live decently, and can smell that sort of stuff for miles, even after it is buried. When I get time to write a book I'm going to write it on how men are like different animals—some like a Percheron and some like a Morgan, some like an ox and some like a collie, and some like a snake and some like a skunk and so on. Believe me, that book will sell all right. I know it. I've been wanting for fifteen years to get time to write it.

Well, anyhow, Simpson was the first man to know that Mac's wife had gone flirtatious. And of course when Simpson knew it, everybody else soon knew it—except Mac. Simpson certainly beat that dago to wireless. We never knew his system and he never gave it a name, but it flashed the information just the same.

The question was, what would Mac do when he was made wise? We all thought that he would be an ugly

actor. That is why none of us told him. He was of the quiet sort, never boasted, never quarreled, never carried a gun, and that's why we were all certain he'd kill the man in the case sure and likely his wife into the bargain, as soon as he found out what was going on. No one could remember having ever heard him say what he would do if he found that his wife had gone wrong. Of course what a man should do in such a case had been discussed often enough by us fellows as we loafed around the hotels in the evening. But so far as we could remember Mac had never said what he would do. He had just listened. That was his way. He hardly ever said much. He just smoked and listened. And he never discussed his own affairs. So we were all certain that the coroner would have a job and some of the pen pushers a good assignment as soon as Mac heard about the shows and rides and little quiet dinners pulled off

by Mrs. Mac and the man that wasn't Mr. Mac.

Mac was just an average traveling man. He wasn't a saint. He made no pretensions. If he went to church it was 60 and five to kill the time and the balance because he liked music. If he could get a customer to order five dozen when perhaps four would be all he could reasonably expect to sell, Mac of course took the order for five—it was his business to sell goods for his house and it was up to the customer to keep goods from getting old on his shelves. Like enough Mac sometimes made the traveling man's mistake and wrote it down six gross when it should have been only five, but when the house writes its travelers to push out a line that is getting stale it always makes, of course, a special low price on that line and to load a customer up with it is really doing him a favor. Of course Mac sometimes had wrong information as to when goods could be shipped, but then he wasn't bossing the shipping

department of his house—he was selling goods. I'll never forget how he cleaned me out of an order at Galesburg. I had him beat 20 cents a dozen on shirts that to old Abrams looked exactly as good as Mac's. The material was identical. Mac got one of my samples somehow—of course he had some one to steal it, I never found out who. That waitress with the kinky blonde hair and the scar on her chin was so good to me that trip I've always suspicioned her. They must have put a corset on that girl when she was born instead of the usual band. Once some of us held her and measured her and she was five times as big around her hips as around her waist. That was with her clothes on, of course, but it was in summer, and making all due discounts for the clothes wouldn't change the result. Well, anyhow, Mac got one of my samples and took it up to Abrams and laid my shirt down on his sample, same price, same discounts,

same dating, and showed Abrams that his shirt was half an inch wider than mine and that the seams and button holes were better and that his was reinforced in places, and Abrams put his initials on a total of eleven dozens, counting the halves and quarters. It took me three years to get the old son of Abraham to carry my line.

As I've said, Mac was just an average traveling man. That's giving him or any man a fairly good, clean credit rating. I know what is said of traveling men, and it is true of a few, but they will stack up with any other class of human beings. We see and hear of the one that gambles and fights booze, and not the ninety-nine that are sober, moral and hard working. There never was a lodge or church or class of men that didn't have some fabrics that wouldn't wash. Take even the apostles. One tipped off the game for thirty plunks, even the best of them went to sleep at the switch, the loudest mouthed one of the gang was a turn-

coat and liar, and the whole measly outfit were quitters, and when Christ was crucified they all crawled into their holes and tried to pull their holes in after them. The only ones that stuck were women—the mother and a drug store blonde speakeasy. The mother that is a mother never does go back on her son. The worse the trouble he is in the closer she sticks to him, the more she will do for him. That's the mother of it. You might say that's the woman of it. Let a man be square and sober and turn his pay check over to his wife regular, and the chances are that she will write to him once in two weeks if she doesn't lose his route sheet, and give him a fair combing down every day he is in. But let him be a souse and never earn a dollar and beat her up regular, and she'll take in washing to feed his carcass and swear him out every time the neighbors have him juggled. Women have a streak of the dog in them—the more you beat them the better they like you and the

closer they will stick to you. If it were allowable for a man to take a hickory club and beat his wife the first day they were married—beat her just as long as he could without actually killing her—there would be no domestic infelicity and the divorce court judges would have to do something for an honest living.

Traveling men have a hard lot. I don't mean the high up ones that get big salaries and never have their expense accounts checked up and make only the big places where there are first class hotels and shows, but the general run of traveling men that make nearly all the towns and drive to places off the railroad. The worst road in the country is the one that goes to your customer off the railroad and the day you have to make the drive is the worst weather of the season. Of course the road is so bad no one will take you in an auto and they resurrect an old buggy that Noah said wasn't worth taking into the ark and two horses

that lift their hoofs two feet off the ground and set them down six inches from where they were, and, of course, the old buggy breaks down every other mile, and when you get to your customer's you find that the old woman has kicked off the covers and he has lumbago or some other disease of the kidneys and you don't even get to show your samples. Then of all the crimes against humanity since Eve took advantage of Cain's unclad condition, the hay barn called a hotel in the small town has the game cinched and five aces to spare. No other animal called man is half as lazy, half as independent and impudent, half as ornery, as the fellow that runs the aforementioned hotel. The only reason he lives is that it is easier to breathe than not to. The United States language has more than eighty thousand words—my Vest Pocket Compendium of Universal Knowledge says so—and one might be able to use it to express adequately the poor quality of the grub

if that grub wasn't spoiled absolutely somehow in the kitchen. At the Clarendon House the gent's walk is right along the kitchen door and once I saw the cook frying beef steak and she kept trying it and when she could no longer cut it she took it off the range and sent it to the dining room. Fact. She had one leg shorter than the other and it was an awful hot day, and as she bobbed around the range the sweat from her face kept dropping into the frying pan. But I don't think it was the sweat that toughened the steak. It is just some way these cooks in country hotels have of toughening up steak. And I never could understand how they fry potatoes to make them taste like a junk shop smells. One time I heard the proprietor of that same Clarendon House talking with the boss of the livery:

"Guess I'll go down to Switzer's and get a box of axle grease," said the boss of the livery.

"What for?" asked the proprietor.

"The hind wheels on two of the buggies won't turn any more."

"Wait a minute. I'll get some butter. That will be cheaper."

Well, they went down into the cellar and I heard them talking there:

"This butter is better than what you have there," said the livery man to the proprietor.

"Guess that's so," said the proprietor. "Take what you have there for the buggies and we'll use what I have on the tables."

And the Clarendon House was the best for a hundred miles and we all tried to Sunday there!

However, the grub wouldn't be so bad if the rooms weren't so much worse. They aren't buggy, but I've known men that had been on the road ten years that couldn't breathe in insect powder all night without having a bad taste the next morning. That wouldn't be so bad if it wasn't that every one of those towns is dry territory. It ought to be in every state

constitution that when the law puts the saloons out of business it compel the drug stores to pay at least forty cents a gallon for whiskey. Why, one night the proprietor of the drug store in the corner of that same Clarendon House rolled a barrel of his best grade whiskey into the cellar and the next morning the whiskey was all over the floor. Investigation showed that the whiskey had eaten through the barrel. And wherever it was on the concrete floor it made it soupy. The worst feature in the rooms of these town hotels is the stove. You freeze going to bed and some time in the night the stove runs the temperature of the room up to 140 and when you get up in the morning you have to take the poker to break the ice in the pitcher before you can wash. I know some men that carry a chisel for that in their grips.

I tell you the traveling man carries a heavy heart under his vest. You might not guess it when you saw him come in and drop his grips and give

them a kick and shake hands with the proprietor of the hotel and the girl behind the counter or the news stand and yell at the head waitress at the door of the dining room and register from *Chicago* and ask if there are any wires or mail and walk over and buy a cigar and light it and look up at the ceiling and blow up a lot of smoke and then look at the cigar as if he wasn't sure just where the cabbage had been grown and it was too infernally bad a man couldn't get a decent cigar any more west of Chicago, but the chances are that all that time the traveling man is thinking of the old girl and the kiddies in the \$50.00 a month flat, janitor service the worst. You see a lot of the boys around a square table in the sample room playing cards and smoking and feeding pennies to the electric piano, and you would think they were the luckiest, most contented, happiest fellows on earth. But they aren't. It's a safe bet that every one is thinking of his old mother and his wife and the

baby and wishing he could just surprise them. You'll hear them say it, too, every time. I don't know of any lot of men that is more saving or that thinks oftener of the family. I remember that one night Charley Klein and I had to room together at the Clarendon. Charley had had bad luck that evening—the cards run against him right along—and he quit loser \$2.80. As a general proposition Charley won. He was honest, but a good dealer. Well, Charley concluded to write to his father—his mother was dead and all his brothers and sisters had married and moved away—and Charley thought he ought to write occasionally to his father, who was naturally lonesome, especially as he was stone deaf and could hardly walk and was too blind to read. Charley was going to send his father two dollars and then he reflected that he had a wife and four small children and ought to be saving and economical and so he sent his father only a dollar. I believe that if Charley

had waited until morning and had thought about his wife and four small children all night he would have been so economical he wouldn't have sent his father anything.

As a general thing, commercial travelers are very domestic in their tastes. They are great home lovers and wouldn't care if they made less money if they could only get a job at any honorable work that would let them stay at home. Every one of them says so. It's sure pathetic that the men that most prize home and family and would most appreciate being with the wife and children, must spend practically all their time in cheerless hotels, enduring the hardships of the road, among strangers that don't give a whoop whether they live or die!

And there is no possible way to help it as long as a man stays on the road. You might think that there is, but there isn't. I never knew a man more devoted to his wife than Ed Mann. They had no children and that made it

worse—all the affection of Ed's big heart went right onto his wife alone. Ed was always talking about his wife and wishing that he could hear of some job that would make him a living for his wife and himself, that would allow him to live at home instead of crawling through a miserable existence on railroad trains and in hotels—a traveling man didn't live, he just existed. Ed got home only five times a year. Once his house wanted him to take territory where he could run in for Saturday afternoon and Sunday every two weeks, but he turned it down, because that wouldn't be living at home and seeing his wife that often—er would only make her feel worse—she would hardly be over his having to leave until he would be in again. Well, do you know, his wife got a job on the road herself! She couldn't just stand it away from Ed so much and then Ed had a weak back and couldn't unpack and pack his trunks very often and as a consequence his sales didn't

command much of a salary. Ed's wife signed up to sell a line of woman's underwear and she made the same towns he did, so she could be with him all the time. Take it from me she was a hustler and it wasn't six months until she was selling more goods than Ed and she helped him with his trunks, too! Yet it wasn't at all satisfactory. You see it wasn't living at home. A man's wife may be with him right along, but that doesn't make a hotel anything but a hotel. A man may have no other happiness to compare with being with his wife at home, but on the road it is different. Ed's wife was awfully cute and full of jokes and she was a good pal and went to her room right after supper and never said a word when Ed played hearts till midnight—there was never much money changed hands—of course it was just a social game—a traveling man never plays for money—only just enough to make the game interesting—and the only thing she did was to cry a little when Ed got boiled

and fell down the stairs. She couldn't have acted better, but she interfered, and everybody was glad when she got a promotion and better territory. Of course Ed stayed. It was pitiful the way he missed her, but he just couldn't get any decent job that would let him stay at home.

Mac was a great home lover, though he never said so much about it—I've said that he didn't talk much. So we weren't so very much surprised when all at once he quit the road. He never said a word about it—just quit. That was a good bit Mac's way. The first we knew of it was when he made his last trip, introducing his successor to his customers. We were just a little surprised that when Mac quit the road he took up life insurance. Sold it. But that isn't what it used to be. The man that has salesmanship makes big money at it if he works. Mac made good from the start. People knew that he was square and that counts big in life insurance. It's work now-

adays for high class men in every way. The old tricks don't go—least ways with the new companies. Mac sold a lot of us boys—I've got a policy in his company—Farmers' National Life. Was glad to let Mac write me. You see his company does business under the Indiana compulsory deposit legal reserve or compulsory reserve legal deposit law, I've forgotten which, and that makes every one of its policies absolutely safe. Mac put up a new home this summer. Says money wouldn't tempt him to go back on the road.

That's easy to believe, for, like all traveling men, Mac is domestic in his tastes—great home lover. Of course he had his fun and jokes on the road. But he never hung about saloons and he read a lot and good stuff—the Bible if the Gideons had left one, and James Whitcomb Riley and George Ade and B. L. T. and Collier's and the Geographic and I never knew another man that could quote as much good poetry—Pope and Douglas Malloch

and John Rhuddlau and Amsbary. He was no woman-hater, still he was always moderate and careful. He was a great fellow to josh and jolly the chambermaids and the girls in the dining room, but he never spent as much money on them as some did and he never drank when he was out with a woman—hardly ever took a drink at any time—and it was mostly because he was so quiet and decent that the boys told those stories on him. One day Ed Mann was looking for Mac and he met Bud Bolling and said to Bud:

“Seen anything of Mac?”

“No,” said Bud. “But if you want to find him make a noise like a chambermaid—he’ll come running.”

That wasn’t fair to Mac. Of course we knew about the girl at Princeton and the one at Macomb and the little widow at Rockford and the little blonde clerk at Springfield and Isaac, Isaac & Sons’ bookkeeper, and of course there were others, but what a wife doesn’t know never hurts her,

and, as I've said, Mac was, like all traveling men, domestic in his tastes and a great lover of home.

So you see it wasn't hard for him to reach the decision he did when he found out about his wife. He went right to her and she owned up to everything. She hadn't yet done anything wicked and criminal, though she told Mac she had planned to do so in her heart and believed she would have done it actually before a month. But when she told Mac how it was—left alone day after day and week after week, and no one to kiss and hug her and take her on his lap and love her, and the flat so lonesome she just had to go out on the street and to the cheap shows and into the parks when the band played, Mac proceeded to have the right man hug and kiss her right there, and he put in a busy afternoon besides—he sent in his resignation to the house, beat up that other fellow so bad he had to be in the hospital three weeks before he could leave town, and signed up with the Farmers' National Life.

GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS.

The low evening sun on the Lake made such beautiful effects that I was content to sit down on the bench to wait for my train, for by so doing I faced the Lake and also had my back to the Illinois Central suburban "depot" that looks like an abandoned Nebraska barn. There could not be a better example of Beauty and the Beast than Lake Michigan and the Illinois Central railway, the Beast in this case being Hog. Even the covering of and apparent fondness for filth is not lacking.

He sat down beside me in a friendly way. Likely he did not think of me as a total stranger, for I had observed him loitering about the station before.

"Guess the conductor will put me off," he began.

"I don't understand."

"I've got no nickel and my mother lives a long way from here—near to South Chicago."

"You will try to ride?"

"Yep."

"Why haven't you a nickel—did you lose it?"

"Nope. Didn't have none. Mother's awful poor. She's a widow. Just me and her. I'm hungry. Had no dinner. Had no breakfast, either. Times are awful hard. I've been hunting all day for a job. Nobody wants me. Say I'm too small. Wish I could help mother. Were you ever hungry, boss? I've been to see my aunt. She lives around here. She's rich. She's awful mean. Didn't give me a bite or a nickel. Didn't give me nothing except sour looks. I'm afraid to go home. I'd just as lief be in hell."

"Hell!" I ejaculated. "What do you know about hell?"

"It's back of the Yards."

"Any place else?"

"Not that I ever heard of."

"Where's heaven?"

"What's that?"

"Heaven. Where's heaven?"

"Never heard of it."

"Never heard of heaven! Did you ever go to church?"

"Nope."

"Ever go to Sunday School?"

"Nope."

"You know a church when you see it?"

"Yep. Get soup there some times."

"But you never heard of heaven?"

"Nope."

"Ever hear of God?"

"Yep. That's what you cuss by."

"Know anything more about God?"

"Nope."

"Did your mother never tell you anything about God?"

"Nope. She's awfully busy—has to do washing."

Here was surely an opportunity for a missionary. I looked closely at the boy. I was skeptical, also puzzled.

His eyes were large, blue, very beautiful, and if ever there were honest, frank, fearless, truthful eyes, his were! His gaze was steady, square into my eyes. There was nothing depraved in his face or appearance. His face was unusually open, childlike, innocent, honest. He might be hungry, but he was not emaciated. His clothing was of good material and it was not badly worn. Clearly some kind woman had given him the outgrown suit of her little boy. His face and hands and neck were very dirty, but if that were a crime all real boys would be hung repeatedly early in life. He was really a remarkably handsome, attractive little fellow. His features were all good. His face was unusually intelligent. To match up with those frank, honest, bright blue eyes, he had really golden hair, much inclined to curl, and his smile was cheery and compelling.

"I dream a lot," he said abruptly. "When a guy is too hungry to sleep he dreams a lot." I was reaching in my

pocket for all the silver I had, for I can never forget how hungry a boy gets, but he kept right on, his face, now really angelic in its expression, turned slightly upward, as if those large, deep eyes, now dreamy, saw again his dreams among the fleecy white clouds in the very blue sky.

"I dreamed last night. All at once three girls, awfully pretty, took hold of me and carried me away—right out of the house, into the sky, away and away off. They all had on long white dresses and they all had long, golden hair, curled and curled, and white slippers, and white crowns with gold bands and stars, and they flew away and away with me because they had white wings." ("This boy has never been at church or Sunday School and he knows nothing of heaven," I reflected. "Is the conception of angels lodged in the primitive mind?") "And we came to a great big hall, as big as the Lake, and the ceiling was just like the sky, blue and stars, and the walls

were all white mostly, with blue and green and red and gold. And the hall was just full of tables piled up with sandwiches and pickles and pies and cakes and candy and nuts and—and salads and cold ham and beans and apples and corn on the cob and everything.” (“I’ve read often,” I thought, “that starving people dream of banquets.”) “There were thousands and millions of everything. And everywhere there were guys just like me and pretty little girls in white and pink and yellow dresses and curly hair and low shoes and white stockings, and every kid was just eating and eating. And we had all kinds of ice cream and lemonade and pop, too. And there were millions of grown girls, and they were all pretty—prettier than you ever saw—and they all had on white dresses and slippers and they all had long, curly hair and white wings—only some had wings just like mother of pearl, only you could see right through them. And they just helped the kids to every-

thing and everything and kept asking us if we wanted anything more. And there was music, just like grand opera, only you couldn't see where it came from—it was just floating in the air. Only there were some of the girls with white wings and long dresses that sung and some of them had long trumpets and their arms were bare. And the boys and the little girls danced and you could hug and kiss them. They didn't care a bit. And there were flowers that made the Rose Garden on the Wooded Island look sick and we all sung songs and the floor was paved with gold and the doors were made of diamonds and pearls and——”

A little girl suddenly appeared around the corner of the “depot.”

“Dolphus,” she cried as she spied the boy, “the officer will get you sure!”

The boy had disappeared.

“Dolphus is an awful boy,” she explained. “He won't go to school.”

“You know him then?”

“Oh, yes, he lives right near here.

His name's Dolphus—some call him Gus."

"Just him and his widowed mother?"

"Naw! His mother is no widow—she's married. He has a lot of brothers. His family is rich, but he won't go to school or stay at home."

"He has a lively imagination."

"That he has."

"He is a good story-teller."

"He's the biggest liar in our school!"
She reflected a moment. "And take it from me, that's going some."

Apparently it was.

HOW JOE HELPED HARRY IN HIS COURTING.

They were always pals. That they were father and son made it remarkable enough; but what was more there was more than forty years' difference in their ages. Further, a father is generally fonder of a daughter than of a son. But while Joe certainly was all that a father should be to his two daughters, some way his deepest affection was for Harry, his first born. That may have been because Harry was weakly—he was a puny baby and as a small boy he caught all the small boy diseases going. Joe said the little shaver didn't seem to have much appetite for anything except diseases. He was sure greedy for them. Joe was a great family man and his wife wasn't. Yet they got along well together. They

didn't get tired of each other because they saw so little of each other. Their wishes never crossed because they always kept wide apart—Joe always wanted to stay at home and his wife always wanted to go out. You see there was no chance for quarrels, for the wife went out and Joe stayed at home with the children. When they were quarantined for measles and diphtheria and scarlet fever—of course Harry had them all—it was Joe that was quarantined, and his wife wasn't, because she was away from home, of course, when the disease broke out. Guess it was only natural enough that Joe and Harry were always pals although, as I've said, Joe was more than forty years the older. Perhaps that made him all the fonder of Harry, for he had no children by his first wife, and he was a strong family man.

It appeared that, year after year, as Harry grew older, he and Joe understood each other perfectly. They never had to say much to each other—would

just be around together without talking. Seemed as if Harry would rather be with Joe than with boys, and Joe was happiest when he was helping Harry with his games or studies. Harry was of the affectionate sort and so was Joe. When Harry was little he and Joe were everlasting putting their arms around each other and kissing each other. And they kept up that foolishness as Harry grew up. I used to think it was a pity Harry was not a girl and I blamed Joe a lot, though I didn't say anything. I was always taught to believe that a father should make his children obey. Of course Harry always obeyed Joe, only it seemed like Joe never told Harry to do anything.

Well, Harry went to school, and he was a wonder. He was the youngest of his class when it graduated from the High School in the Opera House—the Opera House was over Jacobs & Abrams Clothing Emporium then. Joe wanted Harry to go to the State Uni-

versity—or said he did—but Harry said he'd rather just go to our own home college. He said it would be cheaper, and he could help in the store at odd times. I believed then, always have believed, and always will believe that the big reason was that Harry did not want to leave Joe. And of course Joe really did not want Harry to leave home—I don't care what he said. There was some difference of opinion about this in the town, but I know that I was right.

So Harry went to college at home and Harry and Joe were always together, pal like, just like two boys of the same age. They played ball and pool and checkers and went hunting and fishing together, and Joe actually started in to going to church again because Harry sang in the choir. It was said downright that even after Harry was in college Joe sometimes scratched his back for him when he went to bed, just like when he was little! I never could quite believe that and I always

hesitated to ask Joe about it. But one of the most reliable women in town told that one evening when she was at Joe's house, when Harry was a junior in the college, she heard Joe and Harry bargain with each other that Joe would scratch Harry's back if Harry would scratch Joe's head. What made that appear as if it might really be reasonable was that Joe always had dandruff.

Well, the first break in the two little girls' career of Joe and Harry came when Harry began to go with Edytha Mae Jones. No one blamed Harry, for Edytha Mae was pretty, always dressed well, had cute ways, read magazines, had a piano, and for four years the Sunday School had always elected her to play the organ. The school was proud of that organ. It was the best organ in the county. It seemed out of place to call it a cottage organ, for it was four feet ten inches wide and nearly seven feet high.

Joe believed in early marriage, he liked Edytha Mae, and so when he saw

Harry walking with her or start out to take her for a buggy ride he just smiled in a pleased way and went down to the store and posted the books.

Some way Harry didn't get along very fast. Edytha Mae went with him more than with any one else, but she had other company, and it was plain that she liked to have more than one young fellow sweet on her. She wasn't exactly a flirt, but she could see no harm in having Bill or Jim or Bob buy her a soda and Harry buy her candy the same evening. Harry had his regular dates—Sunday and Thursday—Wednesday was prayer meeting night—and he was the only one that had regular dates, but other fellows were almost sure to have a buggy in front of Edytha Mae's house the other nights of the week. It was plain that Harry was awfully in love with Edytha Mae and was getting worried and was losing appetite and color. And it was just as plain that Edytha Mae was thoroughly enjoying her popularity.

Of course Joe was watching and knew how things were going. If Joe and Harry had been like ordinary people it would have been the last thing in the world one would have mentioned to the other, but I've told you how peculiar Joe and Harry were. I never learned exactly just how it happened, whether Joe took up the subject with Harry or Harry with Joe. But anyhow this much was known certain, Harry just broke down and cried and told Joe his heart was breaking. And they said Joe just hugged him and patted his head and back like he was a little boy.

Then Joe said, "Now look here, boy, if you'll listen to me and do what I tell you to do, I'll bring that girl to time." But when he told Harry that he must stop going with Edytha Mae steady and take up with some other girl, Harry said he just couldn't do it and if he did Edytha Mae never would have him, but would go right away and marry Prof. Beveridge. Prof. Beve-

ridge was from Chicago and had come to town the fall before to teach in the High School. He taught chemistry, physics, zoology, geology, geometry and astronomy. He was the first teacher in the High School to teach astronomy.

But Joe stuck to his proposition. "Who's Edytha Mae's chum?" he asked. "Mary Baldwin," said Harry. "I thought so," said Joe. "And now, boy, I've never put you on a wrong trail yet. I'll have your mother invite the Baldwins down to dinner right away and after dinner you take Mary out riding. I believe we've owed the Baldwins a dinner for nearly a year." (That was a safe bet, also that they owed everybody else in their set a dinner, Joe's wife being away from home so much.)

Well, the Baldwins came to dinner. Mary was a pretty girl with a lovely disposition and she and Harry's sisters were good friends, anyway. And after dinner Harry took Mary for a ride.

The next morning Edytha Mae was down to the store to buy some thread almost as soon as the store was open. And Joe had Harry make out some bills while he waited on Edytha Mae.

Joe undoubtedly had the hardest job with Harry he ever had, to keep him away from Edytha Mae and have him go with Mary Baldwin and other girls. He just had to lay down the law to Harry every day. He let Harry go with Edytha Mae occasionally—as often as he went with some other girls—and he just made him go with Mary Baldwin once every week.

“As long as you tag after a girl and she thinks she has you dead to rights,” said Joe to Harry, “she’ll never say yes in this world to your marry-me interrogatory. A girl never wants a man she is sure of. The only way to make a cinch of the game of love making to a girl is to make her jealous of her chum. You’ve got to play sweet on the other girl.”

Of course at first Harry just went up

in the air and declared he just couldn't do it and that as sure as he did Edytha Mae would never have anything to do with him and would marry Prof. Beveridge and he just couldn't stand it. But Joe is mighty persistent and he held Harry to his job all summer. He and Joe—mostly Joe—played it fine. Harry soon got to going rather regular with Mary, but he went some with other girls, and about once so often he called in a friendly way on Edytha Mae or took her riding. And you should have seen how Edytha Mae went after him. She'd pretend not to care and would hardly see him on the street, and then she would almost court him. I almost pitied her. Of course at the time I did not fully understand that it was all a game Joe was having Harry play to bring Edytha Mae to time. It was a slick game. Joe always did have a long head. And he invited me himself to Harry's wedding. Of course I got one of the printed invitations when they were sent out. I was among the

very first invited. But that was not strange, for Joe and I were always extra good friends. From the time Joe opened his store I always traded with him. I knew well enough at times that I could do a little better elsewhere, especially on sugar and coffee, and he always was high on nails, but where I gained on one thing I might lose on another, and Joe was always honest on his weights and measures. Once in figuring up my bill Joe made a mistake of ten cents against me. I never noticed it. I'm careless that way. Never would have known it. Joe had figured on the top sheet of the heavy wrapping paper—in the grocery department—and happened to notice the mistake and he walked right out of the store and hunted me up to give me that ten cents. Joe always was—

What's that you asked? Harry and Edytha Mae happy? Oh, yes, I forgot to tell you. Harry didn't marry Edytha Mae after all—he married Mary. Fell dead in love with her.

They've been married nearly two years—beat Edytha Mae to it by four months. She took Prof. Beveridge. Both very happy marriages—only Edytha Mae hasn't very good health. You should just see Harry and Mary—never saw two people more contented and satisfied—they call their twins Mary and Joe.

THE MYSTERIOUS WOMAN.

Morning after morning we two got off the same northbound Illinois Central suburban train at 36th street and, men like, hurried to our offices without even so much as nodding at each other.

And morning after morning there got on that same train at 36th street a fellow less than commonplace, insignificant, weakling at every point.

We noticed him because each morning as he shuffled onto the rear platform of the last car a young woman stood on the station platform and smiled and waved at him as the train pulled out. She did this unabashed; in fact, as if proud to do it. He neither smiled nor waved at her—he seemed to shrink yet smaller within his clothes and clearly he feared that someone might notice her frank, honest display of affection.

I don't know the color of her eyes or the shape of her nose—her face was of the kind that one does not stop to analyze. I believe that her hair was dark. I do know that she was very beautiful—frank, honest, sparkling eyes; rosy, glowing cheeks; the sunniest smile!—so wholesome and hearty and healthy and radiant! I noticed that if there was a child on the platform it always smiled at her. And if she saw it of course she smiled at it.

We observed that always her face beamed and was smiling while turned toward him, but that when she turned away the smile at once faded and plainly disappointment and uneasiness took its place.

One morning a happy-faced, placid old woman, waiting on the station platform, must have noticed this, for she went up to the girl and spoke to her in a cheery greeting. But that morning as she left the station there were tears on her cheeks.

It must have been last March that we first noticed the girl—it was when the wind from the lake is chilliest and rawest, I remember.

We have not seen the girl for nearly two months now. During the late summer she did not come to the station quite every morning, and when she did come she did not always wave at that libel on a man, and her smile scarce moved her lips at times.

As I have said, we have not seen her at all for two months now. We two men never spoke, but morning after morning we looked for that girl and then always we looked at each other.

When she no longer came I wondered if she had given it up as a bad job—neither appreciation nor pay; or had gone to visit a mother—doubtless happy-faced and placid; or—“and that slouchy, slouching boob for its dad,” I thought.

I'll never know her name, but really I'd like to know.

This morning the other fellow spoke to me.

"Guess she has given it up for good—that cussed fool shrimp didn't have sense enough to know."

We walked through the station. Then I said:

"That's my bet, but then there might be three impending."

"Hoot, mon!" he exclaimed. "She's just the God-blessed old-fashioned kind that would want one."

We walked half a block in silence. Then he kicked viciously at something invisible on the sidewalk and said fervently—and there was also profound sadness in his voice—

"Men ought to kiss their wives a lot more than they do."

And I was thinking that very thing myself.

BUTCHERING TIME.

We sat about the table that was both lunch and council table—the Doctor, the Banker, the Actuary and the Editor.

None of us can remember what suggested it, but we all remember that the Banker said—

“Used to get up at three in the morning to start the fires under the kettles.”

“Had two big iron kettles,” said the Editor.

“Neighbors helped—boys all came,” said the Actuary.

“A boy always held the lantern while they ground the knives,” said the Doctor.

“Scalded them in a big hogshead,” said the Banker.

“Scraped them with corn knives,” said the Editor.

"Except around the ears and two or three other places—had to use a knife to make a good job," said the Actuary.

"Set the hair if the water was too hot," said the Doctor.

"Generally tilted the hogshead against the end of a sled," said the Banker.

"Best to stake the sled down," said the Editor.

"Remember how slippery the boards on the sled used to get?" said the Actuary.

"Remember how they dissected out the spare ribs?" asked the Doctor.

"Left some meat on them then," said the Banker.

"Had back bones then, too," said the Editor.

"Marrow in them," said the Actuary.

"Made souse," said the Doctor.

"And head pudding," said the Banker.

"Remember the pig's feet?" asked the Editor.

"Best just boiled," said the Actuary.

"But the sausage, by gosh!" said the Doctor.

"Always made the sausage at night," said the Banker.

"Great fun to feed the grinder," said the Editor.

"The mixing was the greatest fun of all," said the Actuary.

"Always did that in a tub," said the Doctor.

"Fellow got down on his knees with his sleeves rolled up," said the Banker.

"Remember the jokes always about his arms being clean," said the Editor.

"And about his having cleaned his nails," said the Actuary.

"And some one always pretended he wanted to get in with his feet," said the Doctor.

"Always put sage in," said the Banker.

"Just sage and salt and pepper," said the Editor.

"Anything else spoils it," said the Actuary.

"Remember they always had to fry

some to see if it was right," said the Doctor.

"Boys always ate so much they were sick, only you can't make a boy sick on such sausage—don't care if he eats a peck," continued the Doctor.

"Remember the bladders?" said the Banker.

"Blowed them up," said the Editor.

"You're wanted on the 'phone at once, sir," said the office boy to the Actuary.

"Oh, cuss it all anyhow!" said the Actuary, as he shoved his chair back to the wall.

"Same here!" said the Doctor.

"Count my vote," said the Banker.

"It's unanimous," said the Editor.

And for an hour four very busy men found it much easier to look out of the window and do nothing—but think—than to attend to urgent business.

THE THREE WOMEN.

The coffin was covered with white cloth and there was a hearse and two other vehicles; for the babe that was dead lay in the home of one of the richest of the neighborhood, and, as in all neighborhoods of the very poor, people were most surely and definitely rated by the expense and show of the funerals they provided for loved ones.

As I had walked the three blocks from the street car I had not been able to see any grass anywhere. If the buildings did not join to one another, there was between them only narrow, dark passageways paved with black, broken boards. If the buildings did not meet the sidewalks, the very shallow yards were trampled, bare earth. Nearly all the buildings were of wood, unpainted, dingy, grimy. The only bright spots were the saloons, with

gaudy pictures and many bottles in the windows, and a "Family Entrance" in the rear. Pathetic evidence of a fundamental yearning were the plants in a surprising number of the windows of the otherwise desolate dwellings. Nearly all of these plants were rooted in tin cans wrapped about with green or yellow paper held in place by red tape. I had observed it and been amused by it many times before, but I was none the less amused again as I noted that, no matter how mean and grimy the building, no matter how stamped of poverty the dwelling in all ways, every front window boasted of "lace" curtains. Some of them were of such texture and open design that they were hardly short of marvelous.

I made an even score of persons crowded into the "parlor"—bare of floor, but, unfortunately, not bare the walls. Near the center was the little white coffin.

When my eyes had so mastered the dim light that I could see distinctly, I

observed, with almost a shock, three women crouched, rather than seated, near together. Their attitude was eloquent of deep sorrow.

One was the mother of the dead babe.

The second had, I knew, in two rear basement rooms, ten children, the oldest fifteen and defective, the next fourteen and a cripple—crippled, it was said, when a little child by the blows of the drunken father. I know not why, but I asked myself if this family had had any breakfast that day. Later I knew that they had not, nor had they had supper the night before. Yet death had never knocked at the door of that home.

The third woman was dressed so plainly indeed that a man might have thought she was a neighbor. I knew that she was rich and lived among the rich. I knew that very, very few women had as she had—and always since she had grown past little girlhood—a heart hunger, a yearning that

was almost agony, for a strong, tender man and pink, plump, sleepy babes. I could but dimly conceive of her feeling as she saw pampered women whose care was to keep the stork away as it was also their care to nurse and kiss dogs. She had never been strikingly beautiful, but she had always been beautiful. She was certainly intelligent and companionable and good. It was said of her that she "made friends everywhere." Yet she was an old maid! Who can explain why such a woman, who would make such a good companion and wife, remains unmarried because no man desires her? Many knew her as one whose pen wrote beautiful verse and also stirring prose. Some knew her as a member of clubs and a positive factor in "movements." A few of us knew her as a tireless bearer of wise gifts and heart cheer to the poor and lonely and forsaken and desperate—a silent doer of much good, fearing nothing day or

night where strong men hesitated to venture—fearing only that the good she did might be advertised.

How often in the night, when utter fatigue brought sleep, had gracious dreams permitted her to hug to her breast her babe—her babe unborn, her babe never to be born! And then to wake, to sob out alone in the darkness, her sorrow and pain! Some of this I had guessed, and she, knowing that I had guessed, had confessed the little that made me sure of so much more. So strong was her mother desire and love that she could not take the child of another as her own.

Which of the three, think you, suffered the keenest pain as they sat there and gazed on the little white coffin?

Whose heart ached most?

Which one of the three was it, as they prayed to God that night, lay prone, beating with her clenched hands and clutching at her breast, in sheer agony?

Which woke with a piteous moan as

the gray light of the morning touched her window?

Which one of the three, as she thought of the future, had most need of the tenderly upholding arms of God's ministering angels?

Which one of the three?

UTILIZING THE BATH TUB.

I had answered a "blind" ad. of "a real equity in a modern, well located residence property to exchange for Michigan land," and had received in reply instructions to call at such a number of such a street to see the property and talk with the owner.

The property was located in a poor section of the "South Side," Chicago. The only modern thing I could observe in the neighborhood was the asphalt street paving.

The houses were nearly all of wood and built out to the sidewalk or nearly so. The exteriors were dingy and dirty. Evidently they had been erected before the street had been brought to its present level. To reach the first floor of most of them one must descend eight or ten steps from the sidewalk. The first story of some had been con-

verted into a basement and one entered these houses by going up a few steps from the sidewalk.

Of this second type was the "residence property" I sought. The gable was to the street. There was no external ornament.

My ring brought to the door a very muscular, vigorous, good looking woman of middle age, health in her bright eyes, health in her full, rosy cheeks, strength in her bare arms. She was washing clothes and the garments were being dried in two of the three rooms on that floor—the tubs were in the third. Clearly the house was too near the railway tracks and factories to permit the drying of the clothes out of doors.

I stated the object of my call. The lady of the house motioned me to a chair with rare grace and courtesy and then called, "Mr. Baldwin—Mr. Baldwin."

Mr. Baldwin came from a rear porch. He walked slowly. The heels of his

shoes rasped along the floor. He lacked both fat and muscle. No need of his telling me that he was rarely well. I knew that—also that from the hour of his birth he had been tired. But he would not talk of anything else until he had spent all of fifteen minutes in telling me of his ills and misfortunes.

Mrs. Baldwin had returned at once to her washing.

Mr. Baldwin recited—as it was plain he had recited many times before—that he had never been strong; never could work like other men; with his wife's share in her father's estate they had bought this property; the neighborhood hadn't built up right; then he always had poor luck holding a job—always was weakly—never could palaver the boss like some men—and to live they just had to borrow and then they had to put a mortgage on the house; they had fallen behind with the interest; then the street had been paved—and with asphalt—a friend of

the alderman wanted a contract and of course got it and made big money; they hadn't a dollar with which to pay the special assessment; his wife wanted to get on a little piece of land in Michigan, where she lived before she was married; there was big money in poultry.

He took me through the house to show me the rear yard. On an unroofed rear porch were sprawled two husky, grown boys, muscular and strong and inclined to fat, reading paper bound books. I looked inquiringly. They were his sons; neither had work just then; some way when they did get a job the boss was always against them; a young man had no chance in Chicago; unless he had a relative or friend somewheres in the establishment he was never paid what his work was worth; others that didn't deserve it were the ones moved up; unless a man had money nowadays he was not better than a dog; yes, a woman could always get work now;

looked like a girl was better off now than a boy; she was; a woman could get work when a man couldn't.

One of the boys laid down his book, stretched, yawned, rolled a cigarette. He looked at his mother, grinding some heavy garment through the wringer. He again took up his book.

I expressed some little doubt about the building being "modern." I was assured that it was. It had sewer connections, only just then there was something wrong with the drain pipe—it was choked up. Plumbers charged five prices and then didn't do their work. The building had gas, and a bath room. And the door of the bath room was pushed open triumphantly.

In the dim light of that room I did not at once see the bath tub. It was of zinc, boarded about. It was filled with something, and on that something were a sheet, a gray blanket, and a pillow.

"Mother has roomers," explained Mr. Baldwin. "We are crowded some, so one of my sons sleeps in the bath

tub—none of us except mother ever took to a tub for a bath. People bathe too much—lets the disease in the air get into them.”

Mrs. Baldwin was singing, and remarkably well,

“There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign.”

I had a glimpse of her rapt face, but she saw not me, nor the tubs, nor the clothes she was putting on the line, but a white wooden church somewhere in Michigan; men seated on one side and women on the other of the broad aisle, so rigid that the least movement was plainly audible; the minister looking solemnly at his big silver watch, then rising deliberately to “line out” the opening hymn; a young woman, beautiful, full of health and energy, conscious through all the service of a young man seated across the aisle—a young man that in some way concealed from her that he was always tired, and who, even yet, after twenty years and more, was in her eyes without fault!

Oh, greatest of all miracles, a woman's love! Oh, greatest of all treasures, so often misprized, a woman's love!

As I passed out of the door a strong, joyful, triumphant voice followed me—

“There everlasting spring abides,
And never fading flowers.”

THE MORAL OF THE SIX- CYLINDER.

She doesn't go to a public school. What school she does go to is not important, but I'm not saying that it is a thousand miles from Kenwood, Chicago.

Most people say that she is pretty, and all say what a very bright, attractive little face she has. She has dainty ways, and always gives up her seat in the street car, and everybody smiles at her.

Unfortunately her Mamma — and Daddy always thinks that Mother is exactly right about everything—has some old fashioned, ridiculous, embarrassing, disagreeable notions. She does not think that little girls should wear jewelry or expensive clothes. She has pronounced views on little girls

being little girls. Hence while this little girl is neat and clean and her frocks are up-to-date and fit nicely, she has never been fully admitted into that delectable little circle that has fussy dresses and rings and talks in such a provoking way about parties and shows and the boys.

This little girl's father is not a millionaire, but he has a fair store of this world's goods.

He keeps two automobiles. But that awful mother believes in out-of-doors and exercise, and the little girl had to walk across the Midway every time to or from school. Some mothers are so utterly unreasonable and exasperating!

Recently this little girl, who has scarcely ever known what it was to be sick for an hour, had a severe cold and the weather was bad. She was taken to school in the big six-cylinder car.

And since then she has been of the elect.

Moral.—The protruding moral—always send your hopefuls to school in a limousine—is, of course, immoral.

The real moral—there isn't any.

ROBERT'S DAUGHTER.

As we got off the I. C. Suburban at 36th street I noticed a band of crape around his sleeve. "Belongs to the August Sublimated Salivated Order of Blue Jays or something like—and he may be the Grand and Sublime Most Exalted High Roustabout thereof," I said to myself.

"Oldest member of our lodge buried yesterday—oldest in years—and one of the charter members," he volunteered, in a friendly tone. "One of the solidest members we had, too," he continued, "though he hardly ever attended a meeting."

"Yes?"

"Yes, and something funny happened at the funeral. You see Comrade Robert always stuck mighty close to business. He never was of the venturesome sort. Never would take big

chances. Never would borrow much. So his business never got big as big is called now. Then he had five children. Big mistake for a man of his ideas. He was indulgent. Girls all had music lessons, piano—all that sort of thing. By jolly, even the boys took dancing lessons. Gave every child a college education. You see his living expenses were so big he never could get ahead much. Always lacked capital. Didn't look far enough—missed some good chances. Some way his family never seemed to think how the money came. Kind and loving to him, but no business sense, not even the boys. He just worked himself out. He always stayed down Saturday afternoons and never took a day off. Don't suppose he'd had a vacation for more than twenty years. Was great to hunt and fish when he was young—luckiest feller to fish I ever knew—good shot, too—one day him and me—”

We had reached the corner where I

turned west. "What was amusing at the funeral?" I asked.

"Nothing amusing. Only funny. I was getting to that. The youngest was a girl and she was his favorite. Always called her his baby. She felt awful bad and made a good deal of noise crying around. To make her feel better old Joe Wood told her of the good times him and her dad had had together when they were both young—dances and horseback riding and fishing and hunting. And she looked so surprised and sorter stammered out, 'Daddy fished—hunted? We never—Daddy always worked—just worked—and, oh, oh, it's too late now.'

"And she stopped crying right then. Looked like she felt too bad to make a noise. She just got quiet and as white as chalk. She just set there, white and staring. Downright funny, wasn't it?"

COMMON CHEATS.

“Strange how some people are always cheating themselves,” he remarked in a friendly way as we got off the I. C. Suburban at 36th street together. “The best friend I have is to-day wearing one of those shirts of a thousand pleats. He bought two when they were the fad and kept saving them for state occasions and now he has to wear them out when they look odd. Bet you that right now he has tucked away in a corner of the dresser drawer the white silk socks his wife bought for him last spring. He will save them until everyone else is wearing colored socks. He always wears socks that look old and like no one else is wearing. He buys as many hats as anybody, but instead of putting on a new hat and wearing it, he saves it until it is out of style. His Sunday hat

is always shaped like the lids all the other boys are wearing to work. Because he doesn't start in to wear out an overcoat as soon as he buys it, he always wears one down to his heels when the style is so short you can't sit down on it. Just because he is everlastingly saving his good clothes he is never well dressed. But he has to wear just as many clothes as anybody. He cheats himself right along. I know another fellow—a downright good fellow—that cheats himself in another way. He really isn't stingy, but he never has but one pair of sleeve buttons and two collar buttons and every year he loses enough time changing those buttons every time he goes out in the evening or to church and in hunting for it when he happens to drop one, to make a good vacation. He has only one pair of suspenders and has to change them every time he changes his trousers. He's as bad as the fellow that is always cheating himself out of time by saving and hunting

string and that uses stamps that have no stickumstuff. Another fellow I know cheats himself out of a lot of time changing all his clothes, even his trousers and shoes, whenever he goes to the basement to fix the furnace. Wastes more time twice over changing his clothes than it takes to fix the furnace. Wastes time worth twenty times what he saves on his duds. Then another fellow I know cheats himself on shows. Say the best seats are two dollars per and good ones are one-fifty and the dinky ones away up there are a dollar even. He buys the dollar seats every time and can't see well and misses nearly all the jokes because he can't hear away up there. I'd rather not go to a show at all. He'd lots better go to fewer shows and put his body where he can hear and see. But the biggest fool self-cheaters of all I know are some fellows that drink whisky and beer. They know it doesn't do them any good—only hurts them—and they don't like the taste of

it, either. Can't put it down without making a face. I heard one of them say once, and I know it was straight, he'd about as soon take a dose of medicine as a drink of straight whisky. They seem to think they can't have a good time unless they booze. Come to think of it, don't know that they're any worse than the fellow that knows a sensible, loving girl and thinks he don't make enough to marry. Blows two-thirds of his money right along on things he don't need to live. Spends as much as the rent of a kitchenette flat for fool things for that girl—candy and flowers and shows. She'd a blessed sight rather have him save his money till he had enough to buy some furniture and then the two hook up. He's cheating the girl all right and he's cheating himself worse. Oh, you go west?—all right—so long, brother."

THE THREE WISE MEN OF CHICAGO.

We got off the Illinois Central suburban train at 36th street together. Clearly the fates had not been either very kind or very unkind to him, except that they had given him that greatest of treasures, often mistaken for sublime courage—man's best friend and surest comforter—a sense of humor.

We walked almost side by side. He chuckled. There must have been plain inquiry on my face, for he said:

"A friend told me a good one last night." He laughed outright. "And it was on himself." He laughed heartily.

I put up my guard. I do not like obscene stories and I detest stale ones.

"You see he is one of our most successful and prominent business men.

His old man left him a big wad and he has made it grow. At his desk every morning at eight. But he's stucco all around—you oughta see his own stenog, his boy keeps an auto at Yale, the missis goes heavy on the Lying-in and home garden stuff—they're going to have a swell place at Lake Forest.

"He's the last fellow in the world you'd put your long green on for Mr. Easy Mark. But last night—rather this morning—he's been short on December—he paid for a few corks—and then he let it out. And he gave the other two suckers away, too.

"They've dropped just \$118,000 on a fool proposition to make needles somewhere in Minnesota. War's stopped the needle supply—and so on and so on.

"Can you beat it!

"The whole 118,000 plunks is gone clean—bait, line and sinker.

"And the other two are shining examples of our self-made millionaires.

"Can you beat it!"

He had to laugh for all of thirty seconds.

"A German count got the money. He trimmed them clean, and they can't even squeal."

"What became of the money?"

"They don't know."

"The little kaiser kept his accounts on his cuffs and laundered his shirt every Saturday night."

"Say, brother, can you beat it!"

"There are three of the prominent financiers of old Chi that are pulling hard for the awtant corduall."

"If you want to start something going fast and hard in their vicinity, just boo German!"

"And they're the kind that head all the subscription lists printed in the papers and think that the poor farmers are signing lightning rod contracts."

"O say, brother, can you beat it!"

HER BLACK CURLS.

She had the blackest curls I ever saw. Seemed like they ought to have been brown, for she had brown eyes and a little brown face with freckles up over her little turned-up nose. But her hair could not possibly have been blacker and it just naturally curled so tight that I used to say to her, joking, of course,

“Your hair curls so tight it sure hurts you to shut your eyes!”

And then she would shut them just as tight as she could to show us that it didn't hurt her. When she did that she looked so cute and funny that even the teacher laughed.

We started to school at an early age in those days and she was not quite five when she first came to school, at the beginning of the summer term.

When the teacher asked her what was her name she said *E-lizabeth* in such a funny way that we all laughed. We always tried out a new teacher in some such way the first day. We saw right then that that teacher would keep order.

Jake didn't ever come to summer school because he had to work. Jake's folks didn't own much of a farm. They had only eighty acres and it was over among the "breaks" and was mostly hazel brush and pin oak. It was some gravelly, too. Elizabeth's father owned more than a thousand acres and her folks lived in a house that had an upstairs and was painted white. Elizabeth's father was the first man in our county to have a Durham bull. He took the New York Weekly Tribune and Harper's Weekly and Elizabeth's mother took Godey's Magazine and Arthur's Magazine and had a melodeon.

People said that all of Jake's family lived in only three rooms and two of them only an old log cabin and the

room behind made just by nailing common boards up and down and they had never been painted. I can't say this of my own knowledge, for I never happened to see the place. It wasn't on any real road and then our farm adjoined Elizabeth's folks' farm and we lived in the northeast corner of the school district and Jake's folks lived in the southwest corner of the district. Fact is, when they first moved on their farm our district claimed for awhile that they were in the adjoining district for neither district wanted the children because they had head lice. But that was a lie, for the first day Jake and his brother and sister came to school Bob Bales got in front of him and sung,

"I don't think that you are nice,
Got a dirty head all full of lice."

Bob had sung that before, but this was the first time he had got licked for it. Jake didn't give him just a plain licking; he gave him an awful licking. That happened before school took up and the teacher didn't say any-

thing about it. But he looked over the heads of Jake and his brother and sister carefully and couldn't find any lice. Just the same, to be on the safe side, he took the coal oil that the debating society used in the lamps and soaked their heads good. It was almost Christmas and we had had that teacher for nearly three months and we didn't laugh any in school time; and we didn't laugh any at recess, for Bob Bales was nearly twice as big as Jake, and Bob was wiping his eyes and nose on the back of his hand yet. But we wouldn't play with Jake or his brother or his sister and none of them ever came back to school—except Jake.

That winter Jake's father and sister were converted when the Methodists had their revival at the Union Church in the adjoining district, and that let them into the school in that district. It was a Methodist district. It was a powerful revival that winter and the usual crop of backsliders—you could depend on them being converted and

backsliding every year — were reclaimed, and even the Carey boys were converted and remained faithful until plowing began. They had awfully stumpy land. Why, when old Sam Bettrick was converted that winter they heard him shouting up at Sam's brother's, three quarters of a mile away. I've stood at Froggy Corner, a mile from the church, and heard the congregation sing,

“A charge to keep I have,”
and one night some people farther than that from the church heard Mrs. Skinner singing,

“Shall I be carried to the skies,
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fight to win the prize,
And sail through bloody seas.”

She was the best singer they had—she could sing the loudest of any of them.

Jake wasn't converted. He was too young to go to the mourners' bench, although the presiding elder thought otherwise. He said some of the most

powerful conversions and brightest testimonies he had ever seen had been children no older. But Jake wouldn't have gone anyhow. His father was so full of zeal and religion and the grace of God after he was converted that he wanted to lick Jake if he didn't seek salvation, but his mother interfered. Anyhow Jake's father, especially after he had been saved, licked Jake so often that a licking coming didn't scare Jake at all.

Jake kept coming right along to our school till the first of March. Farm work began then. But none of the girls would even look at him and when they had to stand by him in the spelling class they stood as far away from him as they could. We boys would let him play with us some because he was the best batter we small boys had and no one could beat him at "prisoners' base"; and when Elizabeth's brother brought to school a hard rubber store ball Jake was the only one that could catch when Linn Grover pitched.

As I've said, Jake never got to go to summer school, and he never got to come to winter school until about Christmas, when all the corn was shucked. Jake's folks rented considerable land and then Jake always worked around, taking up the down row, until everybody was done shucking. It was just a week before Christmas when he came back to our school the next winter and that was the first winter term Elizabeth attended, but he was three years older than she was.

She favored him from the very first day. She was awfully kind hearted—her father or mother never whipped her—and she seemed to pity Jake. That very first day she said some dreadfully wicked things for a little girl to say to other girls. The second day she went right up to Jake and said,

“How's your mother?”

“Much obleeged, she's right peart,” said Jake right out. But we didn't laugh—we were too much astonished

at Elizabeth. And because Jake didn't have one of the new spellers she lent him hers, although her brother didn't want her to, and said so. You see, when Jake started in the winter before the only book he had was an old copy of "Webster's Blue Backed Speller, Whereof More Than One Million Copies Have Been Sold," and that's all the book he had until his father and sister were converted and then the Methodists got him a reader and an arithmetic. Nearly everybody in our district was Presbyterian. Elizabeth's father was the most prominent man in the Presbyterian Church. They said her mother had been an Episcopalian before she was married, but we had no Episcopalians or Catholics in our part of the country. It was a moral, law abiding community and all the church people were real Christians.

After Jake got the coal oil out of his hair the first winter he actually wet it and combed it every morning and came to school with it slick. But he just

couldn't get his hands clean. You see he had shucked corn so much and his hands had been cracked so long that the dirt had got away in and he just couldn't get it all out. What made it worse was that we all filled the cracks in our hands with shoemaker's wax while we were shucking corn, and Jake had so many cracks until corn shucking was done that his hands were just about nothing but dirt and shoemaker's wax. Then Jake's hands were just naturally dirty. If he had washed them perfectly clean and stuck them in his pockets they'd have been dirty when he took them out. I've seen him go to the sink in the corner of the school room and wash and scrub and scrub and wash his hands until they were perfectly clean and then hold them up to the stove to dry and as soon as they were dry they were dirty! Then it must be said that Jake was careless about dirt. If he wanted to do something he never thought about a thing except how to do that something. He

would just as soon take hold of a dirty rail or board as not. Everybody that he worked for said that he would do more work than any other body of his size they had ever seen. He drove a team every place when he was only eight years old and he run a plow when he was ten, and the summer he was fourteen, when he was helping old man Bales in wheat harvest and no one could get extra help the minister yelled at old man Bales from the road,

“How are you getting along with only two hands?”

“Got three.”

“Got three? Where did you pick up the extra?”

“Oh, it’s Jake. And dast me if he ain’t the best hand I’ve got.”

That was just about true, too.

It just looked as if Jake didn’t have to study at all to learn. And the people in the adjoining district said that was true of his brother and his sister. Jake hadn’t been going to school four years—and he got to go only about

two months a year—until he could actually spell down anybody in our school or in the adjoining district. Only he never would spell down Elizabeth. She was about the next best speller. Some said Rhody Skinner was better and some said she wasn't. Several times Jake could have gone above Elizabeth and he just missed on purpose. We knew that he did, no matter what he said. He went through the third arithmetic book when he was only fourteen. He was the only scholar in the school that really understood partial payments and he and Elizabeth were the only ones that could get the correct answer to the problem of the price of the horse that had so many nails in its shoes. People said that his mother helped him at home. After that big revival the Methodist women tried to be neighborly and visited Jake's mother all day and they found that she had twenty-six real books—not school books—that had belonged to her before she was married.

Jake's father never read books, but he was an extra good worker. For some reason, Jake's mother never visited back at the Methodist women's houses. She went to four or five houses, but she stayed only half an hour; she never visited back, so no one ever visited her again. The way she acted made a good deal of talk. She never was popular in that neighborhood.

Well, Jake kept coming to school about ten weeks each winter and working around among the neighbors when he wasn't working at home. He and Elizabeth were the best scholars of their ages in the school. Jake must sure have studied a lot out of school some how. He never could keep his hands clean, but the last year he was with us he was invited out some to oyster suppers and even to parties—and Elizabeth always chose him when we played Miller and Wade the Swamp, although her brother didn't approve; and Jake got a store suit and fine calfskin boots with fancy tops,

and wore a paper collar, like the rest of the boys. He got to be a regular leader. The teacher nearly always asked him to put wood in the stove and to wash off the blackboard. He was always one of the two that chose up for town ball or prisoner's base. That last year he was with us he was the best ball player for miles around. He got for five dollars a single barrelled shot gun—an old Springfield rifle bored out—and he killed more geese and ducks and prairie chickens than anyone else, and there were some mighty good double-barrelled guns in the neighborhood. If he had stayed two years longer he would have been real popular. I believe that as it was the Presbyterians would have allowed him to join their church had he cared to do so, although, of course, he would not have added anything to it socially or financially, as the minister would have said. But Jake was not religious, although he went to Sunday School and never touched liquor and didn't swear much.

Jake's family were all good workers and they rented considerable land and had good crops and were lucky about not having hog cholera, and so they had money to lend, and then they sold their little farm and bought a big farm in Iowa. It was really surprising how they got along on that little farm.

We all actually hated to have Jake go when the time came. I was Jake's closest friend and the night before he went away he came to our house and we filled up the fireplace with hickory, and cracked hazel nuts and shellbarks on the hearth. We were talking about Jake's new home and about his going away, of course, and I was just completely flabbergasted when he blurted out,

"If it weren't for just one thing, I'd hope to God I'd never see this old neighborhood again."

I was so surprised I was struck dumb. I couldn't say anything and anyhow if I had asked him I don't believe Jake would have told me what

that one thing was or why he spoke that way. I couldn't understand it then, but I think now that Jake had not forgotten how he and his family had been treated when they first came. I guess that was the reason, too, why he would never talk about himself or his family. He was so odd in that way that none of us was very much surprised when not one of us, so far as we could learn, ever got a word from him direct after he went to Iowa. As I have said, I was his closest friend, yet he never even wrote to me—not once. That night before he went away I said to him:

“You must be sure to write to me real often, Jake.”

“I'm no hand to write letters. Never had any one to write to. Never wrote a real letter in my life.”

Still I was sure he would write to me. But he didn't. I wrote him three times, but he never answered. We never heard from any of his family either. Not even the Methodists

heard from them. When the Methodists were raising money to paint the church they wrote and asked Jake's father to send twenty dollars. They thought that if they asked for twenty they might get ten. But they didn't get any reply at all. I tell you they were mad! And Jake's father had been converted three times—he backslid twice. It was plain that he did not put a proper value on the means of salvation.

Indirectly we heard that Jake had gone through the college at Grinnell, and then that he was a lawyer and was getting rich, and then one week the *Leader and Journal* had an item that he was married!

That settled his ever marrying Elizabeth. Of course we were much disappointed in Jake, the way he had acted. Some of us had really expected that he would marry Elizabeth some day, like in the story books. I couldn't understand him at all. From the very first time they had seen each other

they had been friendly. Jake was always doing something for Elizabeth and she was always standing up for him when anyone made fun of him. We used to make a lot of fun about his name and she used actually to say that she liked his name. Jake was always making her laugh. Seemed like she thought everything Jake did was funny or smart. It was odd he never talked much except to Elizabeth. Always he thought her black curls were the prettiest hair he had ever seen. Always kept saying so. Seemed as if she ever got at all near him he just had to stroke her curls. And she liked to have him stroke her curls, until she got too big. He was always talking about her black curls. He wasn't a bit ashamed of it. Once he and Elizabeth passed some notes at school and he denied it, red as a winesap, till she owned up, but he never denied anything he said about her curls. I couldn't understand why he never wrote or came back on a

visit, notwithstanding what he had said that night, and why he had married that other girl without even trying to get Elizabeth.

Her curls just kept the same always—as black as black could be, and just couldn't comb her hair out straight. But of course when she got about sixteen—they let her have curls that long because she was so little she looked younger—she was too old to have curls and she had to comb her hair as smooth and slick as she could and do it up. All the boys thought it spoiled her looks, but our ministers had always proved that it was contrary to the Bible for a woman to adorn herself with curls and such vain glories of the world. Elizabeth wasn't very pretty, but she was considerably pretty, and she was cute, the kind boys like—little for her age, with a turned up nose, and freckles, and always dancing around and jumping up and down, and considerably of a tomboy, and never dignified, and she

did like fun, and sick people mended when they heard her laugh. Only no one could ever make her laugh like Jake could.

There's no doubt that she missed Jake, though naturally she wouldn't let on. But I could tell—she never laughed like she did when he was around. A good many tried to keep company with her, but none of them seemed to prosper very much—she didn't exactly give them the mitten, and she was always kind and jolly, but some way they just knew that it was no use. She liked to go to parties and to have a good time with the other young people, but she wouldn't take up with any particular one. And Mrs. Skinner said she considered that it was plain enough that Elizabeth didn't care to get married and she told of several girls that acted that way till they were old maids of twenty or twenty-one and then no one worth while wanted them.

Then about the time Elizabeth was

eighteen the Presbyterian minister died. We all felt badly enough. We had all become very much attached to him for he had been minister of our church for six years. That was longer than a minister had ever lasted before and it's longer than one has lasted since. Everybody was excited over getting a new minister. All the women and girls wanted a young, unmarried minister—thought he could best meet the spiritual needs of the congregation and be most helpful to the young people, especially the young men. Of course that was the kind of a minister we got. He was all right, too. He was of good size, and rode a skittish filly, and had been a member of a military company, and he wore a mustache. Elizabeth's family were the first to have him to dinner, and we all settled it right at the start—except some of the girls—that he would marry Elizabeth. It was just four weeks from the time he preached his first sermon when they had the church

picnic and he treated Elizabeth to ice cream and a ride in the merry-go-round. The only other girl he showed any real attention to at the picnic was Kate Bales and he only bought her lemonade. The lemonade cost only five cents and ice cream ten cents and the merry-go-round five cents. It was plain to see what girl he would set up with. Everybody—except some of the older girls—knew that he and Elizabeth would marry. Any girl that wasn't crazy would jump at the chance to marry a Presbyterian minister. And Elizabeth was the best girl to get in the neighborhood.

Well, a year went by and then two years went by and everybody wondered what was wrong with Elizabeth and the minister. Elizabeth went with other young fellows, but the minister certainly had the inside track. Then Elizabeth was getting old to marry and would soon be an old maid—some said she was only nineteen, but Mrs. Skinner said she was past twenty if

she was a day, and Mrs. Skinner was right. Further, the minister was getting \$150 more a year than he got the first year. Anyhow, Elizabeth's father was rich and would give her a big setting out. So I said to her one day, half joking and half in earnest—you see our farms had always joined and I never had a sister and mother had her at our house a lot—I said:

“When are you going to get married, Elizabeth?”

“Real soon,” she said.

“Honest Injun?”

“Honest Injun, but you mustn't tell.”

“All right. Cross my heart, I won't. Is it some one I know?”

“You know him well.”

“Of course you love him fit to die.”

“He's the only man I've ever loved well enough to marry. Now are you satisfied?”

“Known him about two years, haven't you?”

“Known him long enough to know

that he's the best man that ever lived."

You should have seen how she tossed her head when she said that! She tossed it so hard she shook down some of her hair, and quick as scat it curled up tight.

I knew, of course, that the Presbyterian minister would be scandalized if a grown woman had curls, so I said:

"Better not toss your head like that when the lucky man is around. He won't like those curls."

"He just loves them," she said.

I laughed at the joke.

"Wish you much joy," I said. "These old shoes I have on will soon be fit to throw at the bride."

Sure enough, inside of a week, Elizabeth's friends got real printed invitations to her wedding, and the man's name was J. Howard Schroeder. That wasn't the minister's name at all. Then it came out that all the time the minister had been engaged

to a girl in his own home. It wasn't long after that till he was married. For some reason his sermons weren't liked so well after that. They didn't contain just the right spiritual nourishment, especially for the girls and women. Miss Nevada Bales, who was always assistant superintendent of the Sunday school and was twenty-six—Mrs. Skinner remembered distinctly the day she was born—quoted what Paul said about a minister marrying. The minister took another charge—he was sorry indeed to leave us, but he had counselled with God in prayer, and felt that he could win more souls in the new field of labor. The salary was fifty dollars a year more, too.

None of us had ever heard of J. Howard Schroeder. Who was he? Where did he live? Did he have a big farm? How did he ever meet Elizabeth? Where did he ever spark her? The Leader and Journal said they had information that he was a

commercial traveler and lived in Englewood, a fashionable suburb of Chicago, and that they had met at a Chautauqua, but the *Leader and Journal*, like all newspapers, was so often wrong and guessed at so much of its news, that we weren't sure about this, although Miss Bales knew well a Mr. Schroeder that was a travelling man, although he was just then not traveling until he made a suitable connection with some strictly first class, honorable firm that treated its men right, and Mrs. Skinner knew that Englewood was a fashionable suburb of Chicago, where nearly all its rich men lived—her niece's husband's sister lived there.

At first we thought the printer must have made a mistake in the man's name, but Elizabeth said it was correct and she just laughed and laughed and wouldn't tell anybody anything. Nor would her folks.

We all nearly went crazy. I believe that if the wedding had not come

off for another week some would have gone crazy. Mrs. Skinner sure would. We called her "the daily paper." She couldn't find out a thing, for sure.

We watched both the morning train and the night train for a week before the wedding, but J. Howard Schroeder must have got off at the station up the road and had some one from Elizabeth's meet him and drive him over at night, for no one saw him till the wedding party reached the church. No one knew him. He was a stunner all right. He was dressed fit to kill. Had gloves and a stove pipe hat.

But what beat that, when Elizabeth walked up the aisle her hair hung down her back in curls. Everybody was just too astonished and scandalized to breathe.

And that wasn't half. While the minister was praying, bless me if that fellow didn't stroke Elizabeth's curls just like Jake used to.

I was the first to catch on—I know I beat Mrs. Skinner—but I will con-

fess that the bride and groom were half way down the aisle before I knew that it was Jake.

J. Howard Schroeder didn't sound at all like Jake Shrader—that's the way they used to pronounce the name.

We found out later that Jake and Elizabeth had been corresponding all the time and that that wasn't the first time he had got off at the station up the road.

Of course our Jake had never been married at all—the *Leader and Journal* was wrong as usual. I was always glad that it hardly ever mentioned me.

Elizabeth and Jake visit her folks twice every year, and I won't ask you to believe it, but she wears her hair in curls down her back all the time. Jake simply won't have it any other way. And you ought to see him stroke those black curls—just like he used to, only more and tenderer,

THE SPELLING BEE AT FROGGY CORNERS.

The sky was sprinkled thick with stars—so much thicker than the stars are nowadays, and they were so much brighter. How they twinkled! The snow lay almost a foot deep in the woods. There was a crust on it that broke with a crackling sound and Ike's boots crunched down into it as he hurried along. There was frost and crispness in the air. There was no wind except at times a mysterious little gale that passed quickly, stinging the face and bringing tears to the eyes. Ike stopped a moment where the black lines marked the deep ruts in the bank of the creek, to be sure that the ice had held up a loaded wagon. He could see rabbits hopping around in the dim light—the moon was not yet above the horizon—scur-

rying, as he approached, into the hedge rows and the corn fields. The leafless branches of the trees were incrustated thick with snow and ice, for the snowstorm had ended with a fall of sleet. As the branches were moved by the occasional wind there was the sound of ice cracking and of the fall of pieces of sleet encrusted snow. The squirrels were all fast asleep in their beds in the trunks of hollow trees. As Ike passed the abandoned graveyard at the edge of the woods, some animal stirred cautiously among its brown weeds and brambles. Unafraid, for he knew that there were no ghosts and he had always had to fight his way, he paused to look at the only "monument" in the graveyard, now doubly prominent because nearly all the "headstones" were broken or fallen down. As he rested for a short moment on the rail fence that separated the woods from the highway, he heard the honk, honk of wild geese in their flight overhead. He could not be mis-

taken in the sound and he wondered, as he had in previous winters, why there were some in flight so much later than the others. Half a mile farther on he passed near some haystacks and the night was so still that he could hear the gossip of the little birds that had forced their way into the shelter of the hay. He could see, just ahead, cattle lying close against the big straw rick around which they had eaten and raced until it made an overhanging shelter. He could hear the hogs grunting in the steaming, rotten straw, and occasionally there was a short, sharp, angry squeal. Suddenly a dog ran past him, silent, swift, sneaking. He did not know the dog, but he did know that there was wool in its teeth.

"Who's got a black and white dog? Don't believe it belongs to anyone on our prairie," he thought. "Bet it belongs somewheres along Texas creek."

It was stinging cold and in the open the occasional wind had more force;

he swung his arms viciously as he walked, pounding his body with his numbed hands. He came to a stump and kicked it with short, quick thrusts a dozen times or more, to warm his feet. As he neared another road he could hear the brisk trot of horses, the jingle of sleigh bells, the shrill sound of steel runners on the crisp snow, and merry calls and laughter. A jolly crowd it was, that was plain. It, too, must be going to the spelling bee at Froggy Corners school house. Yes, that grey team was Bert Gooding's, and that was his sleigh—the moon was up now, and the blue body and red running gears were plainly visible. And that was Cora Crawford with Bert in the sleigh. Of course.

Something tightened around the heart of the walker. He had no sleigh. He had not even a horse. He was alone. He was only a farm hand, and more—or less—than that. Most of the farm hands had a horse, and a saddle and bridle of fancy colors, and

also a sleigh. Some of them, for that matter, were the sons of well-to-do men. Nearly all were welcome at any fireside in the neighborhood. He was different, for he had come from a foundling's home and the farmer that had "raised" him gave him only shelter and food and clothes until he was seventeen. This was the first year he had been permitted to hire out for wages. He had been paid eighteen dollars a month, board and room and washing included, for six months and he had saved ninety dollars of this and had it out at interest. He could fairly hope to be a farm owner some day. Now for three months he had been working by the day—putting corn in the shock, seeding wheat and husking corn. Unfortunately during the winter the best he could do would be to help in the feeding and milking and cut stove wood for his board, room and washing. He could not buy a horse just yet, but hope was radiant—his financial condition and prospects

were highly satisfactory. If only that were all!

The sleighs were now almost opposite.

"Hello, there!" he called.

"Hello yourself."

"Who are you?"

"None of your biz. Who are you?"

"Same to you."

By this time he had recognized a dozen voices and those in the sleigh had recognized his.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Farther along the road."

All the girls laughed. Such wit!

"You're so sharp you must have been roosting on the grind stone."

"Don't have to—just sharp naturally."

How the girls did laugh!

"Must have some girls along."

"Wouldn't go any place if couldn't get a girl to take along."

At that the girls laughed so loud and long—and the bitterness of it was that the girls knew that he could not

ask a girl to ride and none would walk with him—that the sleighs were almost out of hearing before he could call—

“Some people know more about quantity than quality.”

He had heard that said once and it had silenced the other fellow and had won a laugh.

“And some don’t know about either.”

He could hear the girls laughing again. He was in an ill humor. He had the worst of it. Why was it always so? He never could “get back.” He never could think of something mean to say until it was too late. Some people always had funny or mean things to say, just as some people were rich. It was unfair. He knew that the people of the neighborhood looked down on him. He couldn’t help it. It could not be his fault that no one knew who was his father or his mother. None had any right to say they hadn’t been married—none knew. His father

might have been at one time the richest man in New York. Some day he would kill those that said his father had been a Jew—he would stand anything but that. But he would show them again tonight who was the best speller of all. If old Harm Meyer had never paid him wages or given him much money, he had at least sent him to school. He'd give old Harm credit for that. Odd that he never could do well in some studies when spelling and learning pieces to speak were so easy for him. All at once he felt so utterly cast down and sick at heart, but above all, so lonesome and alone. He could hear some one coming—it was a "crowd" in a big sled drawn by four horses. He waited for it to come up.

"Hello, there!" called the driver.

It was Joe Brady.

"Hello, Joe. Going to the spelling bee?"

"Yes. Crawl in. Always room for one more. And you know girls like to be crowded by young fellows."

But none of the young people, seated closely together along both sides of the big sled, moved. No one could be quicker than Ike to perceive this—for that abundant training had been thrust upon him.

"Thank you, but walking is good. Looks like you had a full load."

"Well, we have even couples," explained Joe.

"All right. I'll beat you there, anyhow."

"Bet you don't."

"Bet I do. And I'll spell down every one in your crowd."

Joe started his horses. No one else in the sled had spoken. Silence is more cruel than words.

Ike sprang over the low fence and walked viciously across the field of dismantled corn stalks, striking angrily at them as he passed along. Soon he saw the lights of the Froggy Corners school house. It was the largest school house in the township. It had five windows in each side while the

others had only three. Girls were chattering at the sides of some sleds while young men were throwing blankets over the steaming horses. No one spoke to him. Well, he would show them! He had been the best speller in the township for two years past. And he had just studied every page of that new speller.

The school house was already crowded when he entered. His heart beat fast and hard and he had a miserable, choking sensation, for he was the least esteemed of all in the neighborhood, except the O'Brien's, who had aid from the county every winter.

But, as he sought some corner into which he could hurry, "Old Man Hogue," the richest farmer of them all, who was standing near the door, shook his hand back and forth in a horizontal plane, with a "Howdy, boy? How's Ike?" It would not be long until February, when hands were hired, and Hogue believed that he could get more work out of this strapping fellow than

any one else. Besides, Ike would not have a horse to be pastured, and he would not run away from the feeding and milking Sunday evenings—he would not have any girl to court.

The hand shake of Hogue got others for Ike. Hogue was a leader, not only because of his many acres and steers, but because of his personality. He was "six feet, two," spare, broad shouldered, smooth shaven, with a long, sharp nose, protruding cheek bones, and abundant hair always uncombed. His hands were enormously large and the skin on them was full of peculiar brown splotches. His big feet were in boots needlessly large, with leathern "legs" reaching close to his knees, and always one trouser leg was tucked inside while the other was pulled down over the high boot leg. Summer and winter alike he wore a home-made shirt of gayly barred flannel. It was reported, though not really believed by any one, that once, on some occasion of tremendous importance, he had

accepted a paper collar from one of his hands and had actually worn it. He had denied this, when he heard it, with such warmth and vigor of language that it was never mentioned afterwards. He grew tobacco and smoked and chewed it without adulteration or treatment of any kind—enough to give any man distinction, even in that neighborhood. As he dropped Ike's hand he shot a stream of dark amber between his long, yellow teeth, at the stove, full ten feet away. It went accurately as he had designed—an inch above the head of one man, just past the ear of another, over the heads of two girls and between two women shaking hands, struck square against the red hot stove, and was spattered off among the chips of wood and bark and the worm dust on the floor.

"Old Man Hogue," as every one called him, was sure to be the center of a compact group in any gathering of men, but he was not the most popular man at the spelling bee. That

honor unquestionably went to Bub Monahan. In addition to the very great distinction of being an old bachelor, Bub was reputed to be very wicked when he went to the city of twenty thousand population and all of thirty miles distant, and he certainly always had the calfskin Sunday boots with the highest heels and the most wrinkles in the legs and the most ornate tops—green leather with white and red crescents and stars. He combed his hair in the prevailing style of the neighborhood—brought down across the forehead and very smooth and “slick”—and he also parted it to the right and the left behind. He was the wit of the township and more, and was very popular with every one—old men, old women, young men, young women, and especially children and dogs. He pushed his way through the crowd to Hogue.

“Hogue, I always feel sorry for you when I see you in a crowd.”

“Why, Bub?”

"I'm always afraid a little feller like you will get run over."

That same conversation had occurred between Hogue and Bub at least two hundred times, yet every one laughed heartily, and no one more so than Bub and Hogue.

"What'd they feed you on when you were a baby, Hogue?" asked Bub.

"They didn't feed me. I just eat."

"Didn't do anything but eat, I guess."

"You're wrong, I grewed."

Every one laughed so hard for all of two minutes that neither Hogue nor Bub tried to say a word. Further, they were laughing as hard as any one.

"Say, Bub," said Hogue, "I know why you didn't grow as big as I did."

"So do I," said Bub. "I worked."

Clearly the joke was on Hogue and he slapped Bub on the back and made successfully an exceedingly difficult shot at the stove.

Ike had been one of the group

around Hogue and Bub. Why not? Old Man Hogue had spoken to him in the friendliest sort of way. All the bitterness had gone from his heart. In a moment his self esteem had grown enormously. Old Man Hogue had spoken to him and actually had shaken hands with him. He was no longer the diffident, shame-faced orphan, looking for a corner in which to be half hidden.

Others had noticed the greeting by Old Man Hogue and when Ike left the group and looked around for a seat, Oscar Rafferty, who lived on one of Hogue's farms and stood quite high in the community—he had the best span of mules in the township and every one of his five girls was pretty—moved over hastily to give Ike a corner of the desk on which he was sitting. Ike was glad that all the seats were taken and that he must sit on a desk, as that gave him better opportunity to see and especially as it increased the probabilities of his being seen. Already his fancy

was busy with the long conversation he was sure that he and Old Man Hogue would have soon.

Ike and Oscar chatted about the hog cholera which Oscar believed could be cured by the internal administration of turpentine and soft soap, while Ike pinned his faith to copperas and assafoetida. Oscar knew that assafoetida and sulphur and molasses were the best cure for the itch, but doubted that assafoetida and copperas would reach the real hog cholera. Ike told him how Mrs. Henry had cured her chickens of cholera by putting copperas and assafoetida in their feed and drinking water. Oscar did not doubt that at all, but hog cholera and chicken cholera were different. Ike couldn't see any real difference, for chicken cholera killed chickens as dead as hog cholera killed hogs. Evidently Oscar thought himself incapable of answering this argument, for he changed the subject adroitly.

"Who knit that comforter for you,

Ike?" he asked.

"Well, it wasn't a man."

"Suppose you want me to believe that it was some girl."

"Who else do you suppose?"

Again Oscar was puzzled for a reply, and was silent. This was not unwelcome to Ike—it gave him a better opportunity to think and to observe. He was very proud of that big comforter—ten feet long, more than a foot wide, and knit of yarn of a dozen different colors. He was sure that every one would think that some girl had knit it for him, for it was the custom for a girl to knit a comforter for her best beau—or the boy she wished to be her best beau. As a matter of fact, it had been knit by Mrs. Henry—Ike had been employed by Old Hi Henry that year—and he had paid her one dollar and fifteen cents for it—ninety-five cents for the yarn and twenty cents for the labor. Mrs. Henry had, on the more than a hundred occasions she had thought of it since, obtained a very

great deal of satisfaction from her having charged Ike ten cents too much for the yarn. But Ike was ignorant of that, fortunately for his peace of mind, and he was certain that in all of that big crowd there was none other that had a comforter quite as long or with quite as many or as bright colors. Ike was actually proud of his "get up." He knew that his hair was as "slick," and combed as far down over his forehead, as anyone's. Only one or two had a tie as gorgeously plaided as his. He felt sure that his paper collar was as high as any in the room. The one point of dissatisfaction was his boots—they were of calf skin, it was true, but the heels might be higher, and the tops were of only one color, and a pale green at that. But to offset that was his ring, hammered out of a copper two cent piece; and he crossed his legs and clasped his hands around his knees, to display this ring, and felt that, after all, life was well worth living.

Because of the greeting given him by Old Man Hogue, Ike had several to talk with, and the climax was surely reached when Bert Gooding, crowding through the jam around the stove, stopped for a moment's friendly chat.

"Guess you'll spell every one down tonight, Ike."

Ike feigned modesty.

"Might spell everybody down if I could spell as well as you or Cora Crawford."

It was a shrewd rejoinder. Bert laughed, heartily pleased at the compliment to his spelling, and even more that he should thus be associated with Cora Crawford. No one disputed that she was the prettiest girl for many miles around.

"You're a cute one, all right," said Bert as he turned away.

Ike was now well satisfied with himself. He knew that what he had said to Bert must have been cute, and who could blame a poor foundling for being puffed up because of such a compliment, and from Bert!

The teacher of the Froggy Corners school stepped to his desk in the corner of the room and swung vigorously back and forth the handbell with which he called his school to order. There was no sound from the bell, but hearty laughter from the few near him, who saw at once that the clapper had been removed. In three seconds this important and thrilling event was known by every one in the room. The hilarity was vociferous! It was such a stupendous joke. Everyone laughed but a few old men and the teacher.

"Got to be mighty careful or the boys will get ahead of you yet!" said one old farmer to the teacher.

"I'll do my part if the parents will do theirs," replied the teacher, thoroughly angry. He knew how much his standing would be lowered by the theft of the clapper and that it would now be all the more difficult for him to "keep order." Besides, the old farmer had two notoriously bad boys and only 120 acres of land.

"Better carry that clapper in your pocket after this," some one called to the teacher, and the uproar became yet louder.

Old Man Hogue picked up a stick of stove wood and brought it down with a loud whack on the teacher's desk. Almost at once the room became almost quiet. The remaining fringe of noise disappeared as Old Man Hogue walked to a seat without a word—his silence was far more effective than words would have been.

"I can promise this community," said the Froggy Corners teacher, "that if the hoodlums that think they played a smart trick by stealing the clapper of my bell are ever known, I will administer to them proper punishment and they won't feel as funny as they do tonight."

The room became very silent. The people began to realize the enormity of their offense. They had laughed at the discomfiture of the teacher. The parents felt that they had made a

grievous contribution to insubordination, rebellion, disobedience—a deadly sin and demoralization in the school and the home. In that neighborhood—as in most—at that time a teacher was regarded as a superior being separate and apart from the people. He was only a little lower than the preacher. This was essential to his “keeping order,” which was far more important than his teaching anything or his pupils learning anything. The Froggy Corners teacher was regarded with real awe, for he had a queer book labeled *Algebra*. He did not claim that he could teach what was in that book and of course no one in the school wished to study algebra. No one could say positively that the teacher had ever said in so many words that he had ever studied algebra, but in some way it had come to be understood that he had once upon a time numbered it among his studies. Was not his possession of the book proof of this? His possession of this book gave him even more prestige than the possession of

a deck of "playing cards" gave Bub Monahan. And it was reported that Bub and three others had actually played with these cards, screened from view by Old Man Hogue's hay stacks.

The Froggy Corners teacher was, furthermore, a real dandy. He wore a white shirt and a paper collar every day. His cuffs, with real gold rims around the buttons, were always conspicuous on his desk during school hours. It was even reported that he wore underclothing in summer and did not sleep in the shirt he wore during the day. This last had really no credence, however. There is a limit to what one can believe. It had been proved, however, that the black broadcloth suit he wore on state occasions had cost him \$24, and every one knew that men's suits had increased in cost during the four years since this suit had been bought. But what put the very highest touch of dandy on the teacher was his going to a real barber to have his hair cut, and his using—or

rather, carrying—a white handkerchief every day. This last was the ultimate. There could not possibly be anything beyond a white handkerchief for every-day.

The teacher put himself back in his proper position by requesting the young men who were sitting on the window sills and on the stove wood piled in a corner of the room, to get other seats, stating that the exercises of the evening could not proceed until the young men aforesaid had done this. This also relieved the tension due to Old Man Hogue's unique call to order. While the young men were locating themselves elsewhere, there was, on the part of others, much shuffling of feet, and pushing and giggling, and an occasional little scream, and girlish admonitions to Bob or Joe or Bill to behave himself—admonitions that were really invitations.

With adequate show of the great importance and responsibility he felt, the Froggy Corners teacher an-

nounced that the leader of the one side would be Miss Mary Hogue, representing the Froggy Corners school, and the leader of the other side would be selected by those present from other schools. At once Bert nominated Miss Cora Crawford. She was chosen by acclamation.

These selections made it certain that the contest would deeply stir the contestants, that its progress would be of the most absorbing, even painful, interest, and that the result would be considered of tremendous importance. Cora Crawford was easily the prettiest and most popular of all the girls there. Mary Hogue certainly was not pretty. She was not especially intelligent or jolly or sweet dispositioned. But her father was the largest land owner in the county, he fed more steers and had more hands and mules than any one else, and he was the well liked czar of the Froggy Corners district. Between the two girls there was no small personal feeling

and rivalry. Land and beauty drew beaux about equally well.

As a matter of customary courtesy to the visitors, Cora was given first choice. She was indeed sorely perplexed. Her position was truly painful. Everyone knew that Ike was the best speller present. But then every one present knew Ike. And Bert had been for years her best friend, her champion, and now he was her lover and she truly loved him. But her side *must* win. It would be either a great victory or disgrace. Was ever duty put to a severer test? "Please choose promptly," said the teacher.

"I'll take Ike," said Cora. If she had known the words for her condition she would have said that she was almost fainting. But no one ever fainted, or knew what it was, or spoke of it.

Her choice was the best evidence of the intense feeling of the crowd. There was scarcely a sound.

"I'll take Bert," said Mary promptly. Poor Cora's condition was beyond expression.

How different was the state of Ike! He had ascended into the seventh heaven. To be chosen first of all, and by Cora Crawford! To stand by her all the evening! No other honor or joy could ever be like this!

The crowd forgave him his strut and air as he took his place. His face was very red. He threw back his shoulders and looked very hard, straight ahead, at the stove-pipe. All mere mortals were beneath his gaze.

The choosing progressed rapidly. There were many expressions of feigned surprise, mingled with protestations that the protestant had been chosen sooner than his or her spelling ability warranted. There was much amusement and the Froggy Corners teacher actually smiled when the small children were being chosen. But the real fun began when the fathers and mothers were reached. It was not to their discredit that they came last. Very few of them had ever had an opportunity to attend a real school of

any kind. When they were boys and girls an education was not a gift thrust on the child by the state, and where they had been born and reared it was a real accomplishment to read and write. Those wrinkled, worn, tired faces of women that knew little of books were the faces of true and noble mothers, such as have the reverent affection of masterful men. They took their places, with their stooped, gnarled husbands, below their little children, without shame. When Old Man Hogue went to stand up beside little seven year old Susie Dunn, the crowd "went wild", and Old Man Hogue was so excited that his liquid shot almost missed the stove.

When all except the visiting teacher had been chosen, the Froggy Corners teacher solemnly announced the rules, using or misusing as many long, unusual words as he could think of. There were nine of these rules and at least seven of them could have no

possible application and all of them were sure to be ignored.

The rules announced, the Froggy Corners teacher said as he always said at this juncture, "We will begin with words of only two syllables, in order to give the younger children a chance—and some of the old people, too," and at that familiar joke on the fathers and mothers the crowd roared.

The teacher held his forefinger in a certain place in Webster's Blue Backed Speller, but he knew the words by heart—

Lady—Pony—Baker—Only—.

The battle was on. The room was intensely still. The teacher bent low towards the smallest children there, five year olds, and pronounced to the one *Dog*, and to the other *Cat*, and again the crowd was much amused.

First one and then another missed and had to sit down. Old Man Hogue missed on *Money*. "I never could get money," he said as he started to his seat.

"Right," added Bub, and the laughter was hesitating in spots, for tales were told of Old Man Hogue's financial methods, and it was a question whether Bub's *Right* was a judgment on Old Man Hogue's assertion or was to complete his remark. To every one's surprise, Bert missed an easy word early in the contest. That Cora should have chosen Ike before him hurt him keenly and it was not surprising that he missed, or that almost immediately afterwards Cora missed a not difficult word. She had scarcely chosen Ike when she much regretted her choice. "Cora missed to get to sit down by Bert sooner," said one of the girls.

Only seven remained when the Froggy Corners teacher laid down the Webster's Blue Backed Speller and with much solemnity produced what was known as The New Speller. He requested the visiting teacher to pronounce the words. This visiting teacher was tall, slender, spare, with

very large feet and very prominent hips and a remarkably small head. He was smooth shaven, lantern jawed, possessed of two very small, glistening black eyes, and a long lock of hair was allowed to fall down over his right eye. If he had been going to the worst torture of the Inquisition or to the marriage altar, he could not have taken his place more seriously, solemnly. He took *The New Speller*, laid it down on the table, and then slowly and ceremoniously drew from his vest pocket a very large silver watch, hunting case, fastened to an intricately braided chain of hair. The crowd was properly awed. No one but school teachers and preachers carried a watch. A family was in luck if it had a clock, kept near the correct time by the setting or rising of the sun per the schedule in *Ayer's* or *Hostetter's Family Almanac*. When the visiting teacher had gazed solemnly at the face of his watch for fifty seconds, he deliberately closed the case, put the

watch in his pocket, and announced that as the hour was late he would begin to use at once the hardest words in the book.

The excitement was positively painful. In less than ten minutes only two remained standing—Mary Hogue on one side and Ike on the other. Mary had never been known as one of the best spellers, but this night it seemed impossible to find any word that she could not spell. Old Man Hogue was excited as he had never been before in all his life—not even when the roan shorthorn heifer fell into the “lower stock well.” Within the space of three minutes he reached into his deep trousers pocket, pulled forth the rude twist, made by himself, of his home grown “long green,” bit off a “chaw”, gave it three or four vicious assaults with his teeth, and then spat it out, not knowing at all what he was doing. Oscar leaned so far forward that he fell off the desk on which he was sitting—but no one paid any attention to

him. Bert was praying—yes, praying—and praying as he had never prayed before, that Ike would miss. The visiting teacher was himself so excited that he could scarcely pronounce the words. The long lock bobbed all about his head. And then Old Man Hogue's jaws actually stopped. There could be no other such evidence of the intensest excitement.

The visiting teacher began to resort to trick words. Apparently the contest could be ended in only this way. He was glad of it, for it gave him the opportunity to display the learning in which he excelled. He bent his body sharply forward, drew back his arm holding the book and then brought it high above his head and forward, as he shot the words at Mary and Ike. Apparently Mary and Ike were the least excited among those in the room. Mary was one of those people, unemotional, phlegmatic, that do their best only when aroused by circumstances that produce in others

the excitement that precludes creditable effort. Ike was calculating and cool always. He had been thinking of more than the words pronounced by the visiting teacher. Old Man Hogue would have at least a quarter section for each of his children; Mary was not ugly—she was rather pretty; Old Man Hogue made every one work—Mary would make a good housekeeper and would keep enough poultry to buy all the groceries and everyday clothes; he had spelled correctly several words by accident—he might miss the next word given him —

“There are three words pronounced alike,” almost screamed the visiting teacher. “One is a concave vessel, one is the pod of flax or cotton, and one is the stem or trunk of a tree. Spell bole—the trunk of a tree,” he thundered at Ike.

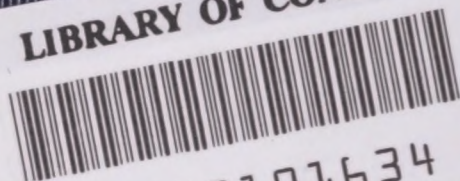
“B-o-w-l”, said Ike. His proposition was masterly, but he spoiled it by being too eager—he started for his seat just one fatal second before the teacher said “wrong!”

Mary comprehended it all instantly. and she knew that the full import of it—Ike had sought to gain her favor—would be plain to all. She foresaw her humiliation—she heard the jokes and gibes of her friends for months to come. She did not wait to spell the word, but with face already scarlet and tears in her eyes, she sat down as if in an instant all support had been snatched from beneath her body.

And as she sat down all her wounded pride, her humiliation, her indignation and anger, all burst forth in one short, terse, exceedingly emphatic exclamation—

“THE DURNED FOOL!”

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